

Disenchantment

LOUIS UNTERMAYER

Here in the German
Fairy forest;
And here I turn in,
I, the poorest
Son of an aging
Humble widow.
The light is fading;
Every shadow
Conceals a kobold,¹
A gnome's dark eye,
Or even some troubled
Lorelei.²
A ruined castle
Invites me to prowl;
Its only vassal³
A frightened owl
(Most likely a princess
Under a spell)—
And what light dances
Behind that wall?
Perhaps great riches
Are hidden there,
Perhaps a witch's
Magic snare.
I walk up boldly,
Though my breath falters;
But no one holds me,

Nothing alters
Except the dying
Phosphorescence,⁴
Where the rocks lie in
Broken crescents.
These rocks are haunted,
Everyone says,
And here the enchanted
Dragon obeys
Only the youngest
Son of a widow,
Who waits the longest,
Fearing no shadow
Of any uncommon
Phantom in metal,

1 **kobold**: a gnome or spirit of German folklore

2 **Lorelei**: a woman of German legend whose singing lured boatmen to their deaths

3 **vassal**: servant

4 **phosphorescence**: radiance; bright

5 **vespers**: a religious service held in



THE FAIRY WOOD
Henry Magnell Rheam

But dares to summon
The Thing to battle.
I've said my vespers,⁵
I've tightened my gloves;
The forest whispers
And chuckles and moves.
Darker and closer
The stillness surges.
Not even the ghost of
A rabbit emerges.
I rattle my weapons,
I call and I call
But nothing happens,
Nothing at all.

Nothing at all.

